



CITY OF NEWTON, MASSACHUSETTS

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION

Meeting Minutes June 8, 2010 – 7:30pm

Attendance

Commission Members: Daphne Collins (Chair), Philip Plottel (Vice Chair), Jack Leader (Secretary), Jerry Adams, Matt Cuddy, Bruce A. Gold, Jane Ives, Carol Ann Shea, Chris Steele

Staff: Amanda Stout (Sr. Economic Development Planner)

Guests: Bill Renke, Russ Feldman, Anatol Zukerman

Absent: Charles Eisenberg, Robert Gifford, Peter Kai Jung Lew, John Pears

Agenda Items

1. Vote on May 11th Minutes

- Two amendments: Phil Plottel suggested striking paragraph on “permitting changes” and Bruce Gold suggested a revision to add stronger language about the Commission’s warning about underdevelopment at Riverside. Unanimously approved as amended.

2. Membership Changes

- Chris Steele’s appointment confirmed.

3. Status Reports

a. Austin Street

- Amanda Stout updated the EDC that the “Austin Street Parking Lot Reuse Request for Interest” was released by the City on June 1, 2010. Organizations are invited to respond by June 30, 2010. The RFI is available on the City’s website at: <http://www.newtonma.gov/Planning/austin/RFI52510doc.pdf>
- Members asked for more information on the outreach that the City has done to spread the word about the RFI and offered to assist with further outreach to potential candidates. Amanda will get back to the EDC.

b. Chestnut Hill Square

- Amanda updated the EDC on the Community Meeting that was held on June 1, 2010 by the developer, New England Development. No members of the EDC were able to attend that meeting. Bill Renke attended the meeting and offered some additional facts and observations from the meeting.
- **ACTION – the EDC will invite New England Development to present their plan for Chestnut Hill Square at a future EDC meeting at an appropriate point in the process (likely, before the Public Hearing of the Land Use Committee).**
- EDC members felt that it is very important for the EDC to take a position on these types of projects and that they have a city-wide focus and view that speaks for all of Newton.

c. EDC Developer Questionnaire Subcommittee

- The EDC wants to create a one page set of “frequently asked questions” and topics that are representative of the issues and concerns that they typically ask of a developer when he/she presents to the EDC. There was a lot of discussion on this and concern that this not be an



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added layer of bureaucracy in an already long permitting process. This is designed to be helpful, rather than burdensome, to the developer so they know what questions to anticipate when they meet with the EDC. It was agreed that the group did not want to rush through completing the document, but that it would be helpful to discuss the document in upcoming summer meetings so that it might be ready for presentations by developers in the fall.

- **ACTION – a subcommittee comprised of Daphne Collins and Chris Steele (and possibly others and with the assistance of Amanda Stout) will begin working on this questionnaire.**

d. Newton Centre/Firefighters' Triangle

- Jerry Adams and Amanda Stout updated the EDC on the May 25th Board of Alderman Real Property Reuse Committee Meeting, which featured a presentation by Jason Rosenberg and Anatol Zukerman on a proposal for the Firefighters' Triangle site in Newton Centre. Mr. Zukerman and Russ Feldman (also part of the team) were in attendance at the EDC meeting.
- The Real Property Reuse Committee Meeting ended with the committee requesting a financial feasibility study of the site. At the May 25th meeting, John Pears volunteered the EDC to assist the Planning Department with this study.
- The EDC decided that it is not appropriate for them to do a feasibility study. The EDC is, however, interested in playing a role in evaluating and analyzing any proposal relative to recommendations of the *Newton Centre Task Force Final Report* (sections of which specifically reference the site).
- Mr. Zukerman and Mr. Feldman contributed further details about their idea and the work that has gone into it, including working with neighborhood groups. Many members of the EDC were very excited to hear about the ideas for the site. Members noted that they have been invested in Newton Centre for many years and that the idea that is on the table represents an opportunity to get something started.
- **ACTION – the EDC will invite Mr. Feldman, Mr. Rosenberg, and Mr. Zukerman to present their ideas for the Firefighters' Triangle site at a future EDC meeting.**

e. Business Improvement Districts (BIDs)

- Matt Cuddy explained that on May 20th, a group—including Daphne Collins, Chris Steele, Amanda Stout, Ald. Vicky Danberg, and others—met with Emmy Hahn, Director of the Massachusetts Downtown Initiative, part of the Massachusetts Department of Housing and Community Development. The group took a van tour around several of Newton's villages and commercial corridors and discussed the details of BIDs and opportunities for BIDs in Newton, specifically in Newton Centre and on Needham Street. Matt passed around a hand-out with some facts about BIDs.
- EDC members suggested that this issue need not be linked to Newton Centre and that the EDC could encourage BIDs throughout the City. The group agreed that BIDs are a useful instrument and something that should be seriously explored. The EDC's role might be to do background research and foster the creation of a BID among the business community in a particular area.



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- Matt said that Newton Villages is working on putting together a forum to discuss BIDs, of which the EDC might play part.
- It was suggested that Matt should talk to Tom O'Rourke, President of the Newton-Needham Chamber of Commerce, and Fran Yerardi, former EDC member and active member of the Chamber, to gauge the preliminary interest of the business community. Amanda will also mention this to Tom and Fran when she sees them at the Chamber.

f. Needham Street

- Amanda said that the Mayor and City staff are currently working on strategies for road reconstruction and planning and visioning for the Needham Street corridor, but that there is no immediate role for the EDC. Daphne suggested that Amanda let the EDC know the appropriate time for the commission to get involved and possibly write a letter of support or take a position on a project.

g. Riverside

- BH Normandy, the project developer, is hosting a Community Meeting on Thursday, June 17th at 7:00pm at the Williams School. Any commission members who are available should try to attend.

h. Mixed-Use Task Force

- The Mayor's Mixed Use Task Force, chaired by Phil Herr, kicked-off on June 3rd, and it will meet throughout the summer. Jerry Adams and Chuck Eisenberg are members.

4. New Business

- Matt invited the group to a pilot "get to know your village" event that he is working on with Seana Gaherin (owner of Dunn-Gaherin's restaurant) and Tom O'Rourke (President of the Newton-Needham Chamber of Commerce). This first event will take place in Newtonville, meeting in the Austin Street parking lot on Thursday, June 10th at 6:30pm. It will involve a sort of scavenger hunt, looking at parking in the village, and food and drink.
- The EDC will hold regularly scheduled meetings during the summer on Tuesday, July 13th and Tuesday, August 10th.

The meeting adjourned at 9:20pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Amanda Stout

Sr. Economic Development Planner